

Taylor-Herr House Designation Report



Louisville Metro Historic Landmarks and Preservation Districts Commission

November 17, 2011

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Location

The Taylor-Herr House is located at 726 Waterford Road in the City of Windy Hills. The property is comprised of one building on .7 acres of land. Currently, the house and property are situated within the 1950s-era Wexford Place subdivision. The neighborhood is accessed from Brownsboro Road (U.S. Highway 42) which is to the north of the historic site. The Watterson Expressway is located to the east.

Description

This is 2.5 story masonry structure constructed in two distinct building campaigns. The original dwelling dates to circa 1795 during the time when Richard Taylor was associated with the property. This original structure is a regularly-massed form that is 2.5 stories in height and is located on the south side of the 1820 portion of the house. Constructed on a raised stone foundation, this block has a two-bay, hall-and-parlor plan. The brick is laid in a Flemish bond pattern with a string course on the south elevation. Queen closers are evident on the corners and on several of the window openings. There are also jack arches over several of the window openings. A water table is located on the south elevation. This portion of the house has a gable roof with deep overhanging eaves. Changes in the brick pattern in the gable along with the depth of the eave overhang may suggest that the roof was rebuilt. Interior brick chimneys with corbelled tops pierce the roof line on the east and west elevations. The windows have six-over-six panes though the attic window in the south elevation gable has a six-over-eight, which may indicate that there have been alterations. A raised porch with a shed roof extends across the east elevation where a later entrance between the two dwelling blocks is located that faces Waterford Road.

The section of the dwelling that faces north toward Brownsboro Road is two-story, five-bay, single-pile, American common bond brick I-house constructed in the Federal style. The building is capped with a gable-side roof sheathed in asphalt shingles and the eaves have been wrapped with a synthetic material. Two corbelled brick internal end chimneys pierce the ridge line on the east and west elevations. The window openings are six-over-six double-hung sash units with jack arches over the openings. A Greek Revival porch was likely added in the 1850s but has since been removed though the ghost lines for the porch remain on the façade. This portion of the house has a central hall plan with flanking rooms on either side. An unusual feature is the enclosed circular stairway located in the dining room. Interior trim materials and floors are still intact. There is a two-story brick cross hall located on the south side of the 1820s block which connects to the 1795 block. This hall was reported to have had a circular stair that accessed both blocks on the second floor but it was replaced by a two-run staircase in the late-nineteenth century.

In 1993, University of Louisville archeologist, Philip DeBlasi led a summer field school to investigate the remains of an outbuilding that had been unearthed by workmen trenching for a sewer line. The detached kitchen foundation located in the east yard of the dwelling underscores the presence of archeological artifacts that are a part of the site.

Surviving outbuildings associated with the principal dwelling include a smokehouse and spring house. The Herr family cemetery is also located nearby just two parcels to the north of the principal dwelling. These resources however, are not included in this designation since they are currently located on separate parcels with different ownership.

History

Early Exploration and Settlement of Jefferson County

The Falls of the Ohio were well known to the Native Americans in the Ohio River Valley, and were documented by seventeenth century French explorers. The first explorations by the colonial government occurred in 1766. By 1773, surveyors led by Thomas Bullitt arrived to map the falls area. In 1778, during the height of the American Revolutionary War, General George Rogers Clark moved a troop of militiamen to the falls. Clark's band included 60 settlers who made a home on Corn Island. By 1779, the city of Louisville was being platted for settlement and Jefferson County (as a part of Virginia) was named in 1780 in honor of Thomas Jefferson, then governor of Virginia.

In the early Anglo-settlement period of Jefferson County, pioneers built small forts to guard against the threat from Native Americans. Located primarily along the Muddy Fork of Beargrass Creek in the eastern part of the county, these forts or “stations” were located in settled areas. One of the first stations established was Floyd's Station built in 1779. The final conflict between Native Americans and the settlers of Jefferson County occurred in 1789 known as the Chenoweth Massacre. With the general end of hostilities, an influx of settlers began moving into Jefferson County to establish homesteads in the late 1780s and early 1790s. The Commonwealth of Kentucky was established in 1792 which included Jefferson County.

Many of the new settlers in this new frontier came from Pennsylvania and Maryland by way of flatboats down the Ohio River. Recipients of Virginia land grants provided as payment for military service during the Revolutionary War moved to Jefferson County to claim their land. Other settlers came from the Carolinas through the Cumberland Gap following the Wilderness Trail into Jefferson County. Some of those arriving in Jefferson County arrived in bondage, Jefferson County tax lists show 824 enslaved African Americans living in the county by 1792. Plantations that were being created in Jefferson County used the labor of enslaved African Americans. Records show most farmers in Jefferson County who used slave labor owned at least one or two enslaved people.

Richard Taylor

Richard Taylor was born in Orange County, Virginia in 1744. The Taylor family was well established with wealth and social standing in Virginia. Taylor graduated from the College of William and Mary, and in 1769 went to explore the frontier by way of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers with his brother Hancock. Richard Taylor returned to Virginia to enter military service during the Revolutionary War. He served in different Virginia Continental units with action at the battles of White Plains, Brandywine, Monmouth, and Trenton. Taylor was a Revolutionary War officer who had served under George Washington and reached the rank of lieutenant-colonel.

In 1779, Taylor married Sarah Dabney Strother and began raising a family at his estate, Hare Forest, in his native Orange County, Virginia. The Taylors eventually had nine children including Zachary Taylor (b. 1785) who would become the twelfth President of the United States. During this time, Taylor was acquiring land in Kentucky eventually amassing eight thousand acres with a mix of military grants and purchased properties. In 1783, he traveled westward to clear land to make it habitable and by 1785 he had brought the family to the area.

Richard Taylor became active in political affairs once he came to Kentucky. Taylor, as a representative from Jefferson County, played a leading part in the state constitutional conventions of 1792 and 1799. He was also appointed by President George Washington as Collector of the Port of Louisville. Additionally, Taylor sat as a county judge, was a presidential elector for Kentucky in four elections, and served on Louisville's board of trustees.

When this property was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976, it was identified as being associated with John Herr. The nomination does reference the possibility that Richard Taylor may have built the original Georgian-styled portion of the house. New research since this time has revealed that Richard Taylor constructed this portion of the house. Taylor then sold the property in 1795 to George Rudy and moved to the 400-acre farm on the north side of Brownsboro Road known as Springfields.

The original property for the Taylor-Herr house was a 200-acre parcel owned by Isaac Shelby. This portion of the county was divided into large parcels primarily as Revolutionary War land grants. Located approximately five miles east of Louisville, this area of Jefferson County was situated near the Ohio River and a branch of Beargrass Creek. Several estates were developed in this region of the county including Col. William Croghan's Locust Grove, Richard Clough's Soldier's Retreat, and Richard Taylor's Springfields.

Richard Taylor purchased the property from Isaac Shelby in 1792 which had been resurveyed at 175-acres. It was during this period that Taylor constructed the original hall-and-parlor portion of the house. This would be the 2.5 story Georgian-style brick dwelling that is located behind the 1820s portion of the house. By 1795, Richard Taylor sold the property to George Rudy and relocated across Brownsboro Road to Springfields. Rudy had come from Pennsylvania with his family including his son-in-law John Herr. John Herr was married to Susannah Rudy, the second oldest daughter of George Rudy. The ownership of the property changed in 1797 with Rudy selling 117 acres of the parcel including the house to John Herr.

John Herr

The Rudy and Herr families began settlement in Jefferson County around 1790. These early Pennsylvania settlers are associated with eight historic houses that exist with a three-mile radius in eastern Jefferson County (all listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976). The eight houses date from circa 1790 to 1876 and are predominantly Federal style I-houses, with Greek Revival additions. All but one is brick, and many original outbuildings associated with the properties are still extant.

In the National Register form, the John Herr house is identified as dating from 1795 and 1850s. The Federal-styled I-house portion of the dwelling that faces Brownsboro Road was originally thought to have been built by Herr's daughter, Ann Herr Arteburn, after Herr had died in 1852. Further documentary research since the National Register listing has revealed that this block was built by John Herr circa 1820. Given its Federal style characteristics this time period is more logical. The house also is similar to contemporary buildings constructed in Jefferson County in the early-nineteenth century.

John and Susannah Herr lived in the Taylor-built portion of the house with their six children. During this time, Herr was purchasing additional properties in Jefferson County amassing wealth through land and slaves. In 1814, Susannah died leaving Herr a widower. John Herr soon married Elizabeth Simcoe in 1816, a widow with four children of her own. Given the sizeable household created by the union of the two families, the expansion of dwelling was almost inevitable. By 1817 when John and Elizabeth's first child was born, tax records for John Herr reveal that the house was being enlarged.

With the opportunity to construct a house on his property, Herr built a Federal-style I-house that had a central hall plan. The first floor was comprised of two 17-foot square rooms flanking a 12' x 17' center hall. Access to the second story was gained by an enclosed winder stair located in the dining room. The upstairs arrangement of rooms was laid out in the same pattern. The new house's entrance faced toward Brownsboro Road. Completed by 1820, the two-story brick house was attached to the earlier Taylor house with a two-story hall that was oriented east to west. This connector portion of the house fused the 1795 block to the new 1820 block without interrupting the spatial relationships of the rooms. This portion of the house has an open stairwell that led to the second stories of both blocks of the house.

John Herr continued to live on the property until his death in 1852. At that time, the property then passed to Herr's daughter, Ann Herr Arterburn and her husband Norbourne. The Taylor-Herr house was willed to Clifton Arterburn upon the death of his father, Norbourne, in 1878. Clifton Arterburn retained the house until 1899 when he sold it to Hancock Taylor. The house was only owner by Hancock Taylor for a short time. He sold the property to A.J. Dresel in 1901. The Taylor-Herr house remained in the Dresel family until 1952 when the heirs sold the entire property for the development of the Wexford Place subdivision. Interestingly, the Taylor-Herr house was not demolished unlike other historic houses in the vicinity that were removed for new suburban development. The historic Taylor-Herr house was included in the subdivision along with some the outbuildings also surviving on different parcels. The current owner Lynn Scholl Renau and her husband Don purchased the property in 1972. Lynn Scholl Renau continues to reside at the Taylor-Herr House and has dedicated her efforts to preserving this historic house.

Significance

Hall-and-Parlor Plan

When the people of the Chesapeake region including Virginia began to move westward into areas such as Kentucky, they brought the house forms from their cultural hearth and diffused them into the new frontier. The hall-and-parlor vernacular house form was favored by early settlers from the Chesapeake region. The Chesapeake cultural hearth evolved from people whose origins are mainly from England with a majority of Chesapeake residents originating from western England. While these people brought certain building ideas with them from England, the vernacular house style that emerged from this region is distinctly expressed. The dwellings that emerged followed the hall-and-parlor plan that was a well known building form from England.

Hall-and-parlor plan houses are distinctive in their internal arrangement of space. The form is created by an internal partition wall dividing the space into two rooms without a central or side hall. Hall-and-parlor houses in the Chesapeake region typically have two chimneys located on the gable ends one for each room. These chimneys were generally exterior to the wall structure which became a distinctive feature to the Chesapeake region. This is probably due to the milder climate of the Chesapeake where it was more important to keep the house cool. Another characteristic is the location of the main exterior door that opens directly into the hall. The lack of a transitional space between exterior and interior could also be an environmental response since the need to retain heat is less important in this region. The stair to the upper level is typically situated in the corner of the hall. The functions of the spaces in these hall-and-parlor homes were almost universal during colonial times. The hall was a kitchen, dining, work and informal living area while the parlor served as a bedroom, guest room and formal reception room. However, the idea of cooking being separated from the hall became more common. In the Chesapeake region, cooking was also separated from the hall but the function took the form of a separate building. While timber frame construction was commonly used, brick construction emerged as a characteristic of the Chesapeake region. Brick structures expressed the idea of permanent settlement in frontier areas.

Richard Taylor had come to Kentucky from Orange County, Virginia. Documented houses associated with the Taylor family in Virginia reveal a preference for the hall-and-parlor plan. When Richard Taylor started to settle in Jefferson County he chose the house form that was most familiar to him. The original section of the Taylor-Herr house and Springfields both share the hall-and-parlor floor plan. This distinguishes the Georgian-styled house from other dwellings in the county such as Locust Grove, Soldier's Retreat and the Funk House which were built with a central hall double-pile plan.

I-House Forms

Just as the hall-and-parlor houses were brought westward by settlers on the new frontier, the I-house also was introduced into Kentucky by way of migration from the east. The origins of this house form started as the English I-house. What distinguished an I-house from other building forms was the one room depth and two-story height. The floor plans were variable ranging from

hall-and-parlor, saddlebag, dogtrot, and central hall arrangements. Materials for the construction of I-houses ranged from log, brick, stone, and frame. The chimney placement depended on the region where the I-houses were located. Central chimneys were typically found in colder climates where retaining heat was essential. Chimneys placed on the ends of the I-house either internal or external were a more common feature in the south. Appendages such as front or side porches, as well as galleries and ell additions were typical features of I-houses.

Along the East Coast during the Colonial period, I-houses emerged as a common house form. By the late-17th century the I-house was particularly prevalent in the Mid-Atlantic (including Pennsylvania) and Chesapeake cultural regions. The house form had become a symbol of economic attainment. As people from these areas moved westward to settle in the frontier, they brought this particular type of dwelling with them. In Jefferson County, approximately two dozen I-houses have been documented with construction dates ranging from the late-18th century to the mid-19th century.

John Herr had arrived in Kentucky from Pennsylvania where the I-house was associated with a certain level of wealth. As John Herr amassing property and increasing his wealth, he remained in the hall-and-parlor house that was constructed by Richard Taylor. Though this house had adequately served Herr and his family, it also was not as fashionable in style and form by the 1810s. When Herr's family required more living space, he expanded his house using the building type that would express his increased wealth. Herr oriented the I-house façade to Brownsboro Road in a gesture to express his own success in Kentucky. The resulting I-house with Federal period details presented an up-to-date image.

Taylor-Herr House

The Taylor-Herr house is a significant early dwelling constructed in the Georgian style with a hall-and-parlor plan. The house is associated with Colonel Richard Taylor who was involved in the early settlement of Jefferson County. The 1820s portion of the house is a Federal I-house which was constructed by John Herr. Both periods of construction are important documents of the early settlement and development of Jefferson County. Evidence of settlement in this eastern portion of Jefferson County includes the structures of Locust Grove, Springfield(s), Soldiers Retreat (reconstructed), and the Edwards-Herr house. These houses along with the Taylor-Herr house represent early establishment of substantial brick structures in what had been considered a frontier area during this settlement period of Jefferson County. Developers of these properties brought house forms and styles from the mid-Atlantic states of Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. The imprint of these cultural patterns is found in the house forms constructed by these early settlers.

Archeological Significance

Like other nineteenth century farms and plantation, The Taylor-Herr house has high potential for containing significant archaeological resources. Although the lot is rather small the remnants of domestic outbuildings and artifact middens associated with domestic activities are likely present on the property, as has been demonstrated by excavations conducted on site by DiBlasi and excavations conducted at similar properties throughout Jefferson County.

Extensive archaeological excavations have been conducted at Locust Grove (15Jf541), Farmington (15Jf574), Riverside, the Farnsley-Moremen Landing (15Jf531), and Johnson-Bates (15Jf538). Most of these projects have focused on locating and interpreting outbuildings. At Locust Grove, the springhouse (Granger and Mocas 1972), three slave cabins (Young 1995), a barn, and an agricultural building (DiBlasi 1997) were excavated. A kitchen (McBride and Bellhorn 1992) and a slave cabin (Slider 1998) were excavated at Farmington. A detached kitchen and wash house was excavated at Riverside, the Farnsley-Moremen Landing (Stottman and Watts-Roy 2000, Stottman and Prybylski 2005). At the Johnson-Bates farmstead an extensive investigation of several outbuildings was conducted (O'Malley 1987b). Limited excavations have taken place at several other historic sites in the county including Blackacre (15Jf681) (Stottman 2000), Stonybrook (15Jf676) (Stallings and Ross-Stallings 1999), the Conrad/Dravo farmstead (15Jf638) (Bader 1997), the Vulcan Rudy slave house (15Jf685) (Stottman 2001), the Hall-Standiford tenant house (15Jf571) (Stottman et al. 1992) and Oxmoor (Young 1997). This work indicates that sites such as the Taylor-Herr house have potential to produce significant archaeological information.

The Taylor-Herr house has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places since 1976. The Daughters of the American Revolution installed a marker in August of 2010 identifying the house as the original home of Richard Taylor (1744 – 1829).

Integrity Assessment

The house has been little changed since it was built though it has undergone some superficial renovations over the years. Both blocks of the house remain in their historic form and for the most part, the original materials as well as the spatial arrangements remain intact. The location of the building has remained the same since the two building campaigns that created the structure. There have been no major additions to the house since the 1820 portion was constructed. A Greek Revival front porch addition has been removed. Some alterations to window and door openings have occurred however, these changes have not adversely impacted the architectural character of the house. The immediate setting of the domestic yard is intact surrounding the house. There is still a visual connection to the surviving outbuildings which further enhances the historic setting of the site. Overall, the Taylor-Herr House retains the character defining features that support the historic significance of the property.

Boundary Justification

The property proposed for designation is located at 726 Waterford Road. The property contains .7 acres of land as well as the dwelling and is described by the Jefferson County Property Evaluation Administrator (PVA) under parcel number 0378-0067-0000. The proposed boundaries for the Taylor-Herr House Individual Local Landmark designation area are represented by the black lines on the LOJIC aerial photograph that follows:



LOJIC Aerial Photograph

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Designation Criteria

In considering the designation of any neighborhood, area, Property or Structure in the Jefferson County as a Local Landmark, or District, the Commission shall apply the following criteria with respect to such Structure, Property or District:

Local Landmark Designation Criteria	Comments	Meets	Does Not Meet
(a) Its character, interest, or value as part of the development or heritage of Louisville Metro, Jefferson County, the Commonwealth, or the United States.	Representative of the early settlement period in Jefferson County, the Taylor-Herr house, constructed in two separate building campaigns, exemplifies two significant periods of architectural style, Georgian and Federal, in the development of Jefferson County.	X	
(b) Its exemplification of the historic, aesthetic, architectural, archaeological, prehistoric or historic archaeological, educational, economic, or cultural heritage of Louisville Metro, Jefferson County, the Commonwealth, or the nation.	The original section (c. 1795) of the house dates to the Georgian period and has a hall-and-parlor plan. The later addition (c.1820) is a central hall I-house built in the Federal style. The site is also likely to yield significant archeological information about the early settlement period.	X	
(c) Its location as a site of a significant historic event.			X
(d) Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of Louisville Metro, Jefferson County, the Commonwealth, or the nation.	Col. Richard Taylor, a Revolutionary War Officer, migrated from Orange County, Virginia to become an early land owner in Jefferson County. Taylor was also involved in local government as a county judge and was a part of the creation of Kentucky's statehood. He is also the father of Zachary Taylor who became the twelfth President of	X	

	<p>the United States.</p> <p>John Herr esq. who became a state representative, assembled large land holdings in eastern Jefferson County.</p>		
(e) Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen.	<p>The house is an unusual local example of the Virginia hall-and-parlor house form constructed as a two-story brick Georgian-styled dwelling. The c. 1820 addition is a surviving example of a masonry I-House built in the Federal style. The house represents the architecture from the early settlement period of Jefferson County.</p>	X	
(f) Its identification as the work of an architect, landscape architect, or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of Louisville Metro, Jefferson County, the Commonwealth, or the nation.			X
(g) Its embodiment of elements or architectural design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship, which represents a significant architectural innovation.			X
(h) Its relationship to other distinctive areas, which are eligible for preservation according to a plan based on an historic, cultural, or architectural motif.	<p>The Taylor-Herr House is among a handful of highly significant examples, including Locust Grove, Farmington, Ridgeway, Berry Hill, and Springfields, of Georgian and Federal architecture in Jefferson County and the State of Kentucky. The Taylor-Herr embodies both periods of architecture in one dwelling.</p>	X	

<p>(i) Its unique location or physical characteristics representing an established and familiar visual feature or which reinforce the physical continuity of a neighborhood, area, or place within Louisville Metro.</p>	<p>This portion of eastern Jefferson county was the place for early development of substantial homesteads during the settlement period. Currently, the Taylor-Herr House is situated in a mid-20th century suburban context within the City of Windy Hills. The house is a distinctive feature given its variation in setback and the orientation of the 1820s portion of the house to Brownsboro Road. Given this setting, the Taylor-Herr house reads as a surviving example of the early settlement period in Jefferson County.</p>	<p>X</p>	
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